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Sally Jacoby – A Reflection

After a courageous battle with lung cancer, Dr. Sally Jacoby, 58, distinguished teacher and researcher in applied linguistics, energetic conversationalist, theater and music enthusiast, and former editor of *Issues in Applied Linguistics* passed away on July 27, 2007, in Dover, New Hampshire, USA.

Sally was an associate professor in the Department of Communication at the University of New Hampshire in Durham from 1996 to 2007. She received her Ph.D. in applied linguistics from UCLA, her M.A. in applied English linguistics from the University of Birmingham, and her Bachelor degrees from the Northwestern University and Tel Aviv University. Her areas of specialization included discourse and conversation analysis, talk and interaction in everyday and institutional settings and indigenous assessment of communication performance. Her publications are primarily in discourse analysis but one paper in language assessment is an often-cited paper—the one she co-authored with Tim McNamara (1999) based on the concept of indigenous assessment criteria. This work was also discussed in Dan Douglas' book *Assessing language for specific purposes*: “Jacoby defines indigenous assessment criteria as those used by subject specialists in assessing the communicative performances of apprentices in academic and vocational fields” (p. 68). Sally was also a frequent presenter at the American Association of Applied Linguistics Conferences where she could be found in fine form ready to discuss many topics that were brought to the podium.

I knew Sally from our days together as doctoral students in the applied linguistics program at UCLA, starting Fall quarter 1988. I remember at one of our first meetings she expressed surprise that southern California was not all what the Beach Boys had made it out to be. And that Westwood was not Bohemian enough. We spent thousands of hours chatting about other mutual interests in the areas of English, American, and European literature; baroque, romantic, and classical Western and Indian music; Merchant-Ivory films, the Raj, colonial and post-colonial India; jazz, theater, opera, and ballet; Barthes, Bakhtin, and Vygotsky; newspapers, magazines, the *New York Review of Books* and *Tikkun*, and the writing of abstracts and papers for publications.

It was these diverse interests and also the lack of a publication venue for student ideas that propelled us to found the student-run journal *Issues in Applied Linguistics* in 1989. We strongly felt that this avenue would make a difference in terms of dissemination of new student ideas – especially because the UCLA *Working Papers in Applied Linguistics* had ceased to operate. But we needed money to fund any kind of publication and the Department of Applied Linguistics did not have any funds for this. So, I submitted a proposal to the Graduate Students Association at UCLA in Fall quarter 1989 – a student run organization that allocates money to different campus groups based on need and merit – and after a few months of

waiting and interviewing in front of the board, I was offered \$10,000 to produce the first two issues of the journal. I couldn't believe this but quickly contacted Sally to be my assistant editor. We then got on board Patrick Gonzales, Anne Lazaraton, Agnes He, and Maria Egbert in other capacities on the editorial board of *IAL*. And in a few weeks, we announced publicly at a Town Hall meeting that we would be producing a journal with the title [*ial* – in lower case]. The rest is history as our first issue was published in June 1990 with a foreword from John Schumann, an editorial from me and papers from Alistair Pennycook, Lyle Bachman and colleagues, Don Rubin and colleagues, Yasuhiro Shirai (who was awarded the best student paper in a department competition and given automatic publication in *IAL*), an interview with Evelyn Hatch and many book reviews.

Sally was initially assistant editor for two years; then took over as editor in 1992 and served as editor for a couple of years. At the beginning of every issue, Sally and I would vigorously debate how intrusive we as editors need to be in the editing and proofreading process. Sally was of the view that the editor had to play a strong role in this process so that the overall quality of the papers in *IAL* would be uniform; I preferred a more laid-back approach preferring to have authors speak in their own voice which of course often created difficulties in understanding. But through her very meticulous attention to detail, Sally showed how her approach brought excellent results. We also debated for hours the topics for special issues, the manuscript review process, reviews and reviewers, and the composition of each issue. But deliberations nearer the release of every issue with Sally and Patrick (who took over the production editor's duties early on) were the most time-consuming and often went into the late hours of the evening with final touches put to the title page, the front outside cover, the page numbering, etc. Finally, when the issue was in our hands, we rewarded ourselves with a Thai or Indian restaurant dinner in Santa Monica. We would return to this intense schedule again in a few months until we got everything right with the next issue. For all of us, *IAL* was a labor of love but for Sally, *IAL* was also the opportunity to strive for perfection.

In 2003, when I needed to find members for the *Language Assessment Quarterly* Editorial Advisory Board, Sally was among the first I asked. She gladly accepted and offered advice on the planned features and the focus of the journal. Sally also reviewed manuscripts with great care and while being critical offered constructive suggestions to authors. Last year, she agreed to serve on the Board for another term.

We from the *IAL* group will remember her for her gracious and gentle manner, for her enthusiasm in discussing diverse topics, for her wit and humor, for her scholarly approach to language and linguistics, and for many enjoyable evenings discussing various aspects of *IAL* with wine and curry.

Antony John Kunnan
October 2007